Latin classic incunabula printed in Spain: their transmission across the borders

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Abstract:

The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of how the copies’ of incunable editions of Latin classic authors printed in Spain crossed—and they are still crossing—all kind of borders. The reference corpus of copies’ is made up of incunabula produced in printing houses located in Spain from the 1470s till 1500, including printings in Latin and in translation as well. This study is based on the information from the CICLE Database (Corpus of Classic Latin Incunabula in Spain). These editions represent an extremely valuable testimony concerning the Spanish Renaissance Humanism. Paradoxically, most of the copies are not in Spain currently, but, on the contrary, they have come into different libraries in America and in Europe by varied historical vicissitudes. The investigation carried-up allows to trace the ways of dissemination and the diffusion of cultural heritage materialized in a well identified corpus of copies what are crossing borders since their publication in the XVth century.

Keywords: incunabula of Latin classics printed in Spain across borders.

The main objective of this presentation is to offer a panoramic view of how a well-defined corpus of copies has been distributed and has crossed borders over the centuries. The corpus of copies studied here is composed of testimonies of incunabula of classic Latin authors in Latin or translated to the Romance language printed in Spain. This will result in increased knowledge about Spanish Renaissance humanism and how it was disseminated through its own publishing products.

1 This study is under the framework of the "Estudio filológico de los textos clásicos latinos transmitidos en impresos incunables y postincunables conservados en España III", FF12015-67335-P, Research Project financed by the Spanish National Plan for Scientific and Technical Research and Innovation (Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness). The Principal Investigator of this Research Project is Antonio Moreno Hernández, Professor of Classical Philology at the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED).
The study is based on the research results which led to the preparation of the **CICLE Database** (Corpus of Classic Latin Incunabula printed in Spain) by the BECLaR Research Team (Library of Latin Classical Editions in the Renaissance). This database was developed within the framework of the research project directed by Antonio Moreno, PhD.

The main parameters to describe the copies of Latin classic editions printed in Spain has been, apart from their catalogue numbers and the library where they are held today, descriptions of the manuscript annotations, bookplates, and any kind of provenance marks that might help identify their previous owners. Two methods were used to obtain this information: directly consulting the copies and also researching catalogues and querying staff in charge of the old book collection in the libraries. Although in some cases, especially those in which the copy was acquired more recently, there is no trace of the book, the library has records of the time the copy was added to its collection and exactly where it came from.

CICLE provides an enormous array of amount of information on copies that crossed Spanish borders so criteria must be used to help us systematically address and analyse the information on this corpus of copies.

1) First, we will deal with the characteristics of the editions of the copies that crossed Spanish borders. The questions we ask are:

   a. What do the editions of copies held outside of Spain have in common?
   b. What Spanish printing press products interested a foreign audience?

2) Then we will define different criteria to classify the information taken from the provenance marks to identify the way this document heritage was transmitted across borders before arriving at the libraries where they reside today.

   a. Chronology and historical circumstances. When were the copies of the incunabula of the Latin classics printed in Spain dispersed? Can we identify key moments?
   b. Type of readers and geographic spaces. What profile did readers interested in this document heritage have and what territories did they live in?

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2 For more information, please visit the website: [http://www.incunabula.uned.es/repertorios.php?apartado=Cicle&seccion=acceso](http://www.incunabula.uned.es/repertorios.php?apartado=Cicle&seccion=acceso)

c. Type of libraries (before their current location). In what kind of libraries were these copies kept in past centuries? Where they private or institutional libraries?

The combination of these criteria will allow us to deepen the analysis of the ways incunabula of Latin classics printed in Spain over the centuries were passed on.

3) Lastly, we will review through what channels these copies have arrived at their current location.

1. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EDITIONS WHOSE COPIES ARE HELD OUTSIDE OF SPAIN

There are 29 editions of Latin classics printed in Spain in the incunable period of which 271 copies are conserved. Many of these copies are located in libraries outside of Spain so how this document heritage arrived at their current location must be studied. There are 136 copies held outside of Spain and 135 copies in Spanish libraries.

Since the number of copies held depends initially on two conditions unrelated to their current location, it follows that the relationship between the number of copies held inside and outside of Spain would tend to be similar. These conditions are: 1) The number of copies printed in each print run and 2) the nature and use made of the editions like, for instance, that copies for schoolchildren are in worse condition.

However, in some editions the difference between the number of copies held inside or outside of Spain is quite significant. It is with these editions with more copies outside of Spain that we will attempt to analyze what brought those copies across Spanish borders.

For four editions, there are more copies outside of Spain than in Spanish libraries:

1) *De coniurazione Catilinae* and *De Bello Iugurthino*, by Sallustius, translated to Spanish by Francisco Vidal de Noya (1415-1492) as “El Salustio Cathilinario y Jugurtha en romançe”. Paul Hurus printed this edition in Zaragoza in 1493 (CICLE0096). Today, 3 copies are in Spain and 4 outside of Spain.

2) *De coniurazione Catilinae* and *De Bello Iugurthino*, by Sallustius, translated to Spanish by Francisco Vidal de Noya as “Salustio Cathilinario y la historia del Iugurtha”. Juan de Burgos printed this edition in Valladolid in 1500 (CICLE0063). Today, 1 copy is in Spain and 3 outside of Spain.
3) *Historiae Alexandri Magni*, by Quintus Curtius, translated to Catalan as “La historia de Alexandre scrita de Quinto curcio ruffo”. Pedro Posa and Peter Brun printed this edition in Barcelona in 1481 (CICLE0064). Today, 4 copies are in Spain and 8 outside of Spain.

4) *De chorographia*, by Pomponius Mela, printed in Salamanca by Juan de Porras in 1498 (CICLE0059). Today, 8 copies are in Spain and 14 outside of Spain.

For another four editions, the same number of copies is held outside of Spain as in Spanish libraries:

1) *Opera philosophica*, by Seneca, translated to Spanish by Alfonso de Cartagena (1384-1456) and known as “Los cinco libro de Séneca”. Meinhard Ungut and Stanislaus Polonus printed this edition in Seville in 1491 (CICLE0093). Today, 16 copies are in Spain and another 16 outside of Spain.

2) *Proverbia Senecae*, by pseudo Seneca, translated to Spanish by Pedro Díaz de Toledo (1415-1466) and known as “Los proverbios de Séneca”. Paul and Hans Hurus printed this edition in Zaragoza in 1491 (CICLE0087). Today, 3 copies are in Spain and another 3 outside of Spain.

3) *Metamorphoseon*, by Ovidius, translated to Catalan by Francesc Alegre (mediados s. XV-1508/11) as “Los quinze llibres de transformacions”. Pere Miquel printed this edition in Barcelona in 1494 (CICLE0070). Today, 9 copies are in Spain and another 9 outside of Spain.

4) *Corpus Caesariano*, translated to Spanish by Diego López de Toledo (s. XV-post.1521) as “Los comentarios de Gayo Julio Cesar”. Peter Hagembach printed this edition in Toledo in 1498 (CICLE0098). Today, 9 copies are in Spain and another 9 outside of Spain.

A separate mention should be made for editions of the compendiums of texts known as *Fabulae Aesopi*. By far, these had the biggest runs in Spanish printing shops and very few copies of these editions have been conserved. Often only one copy survives and it is outside of Spain. The conservation of these copies outside of Spain is probably due to their rarity. In the case of editions of *Fabulae*, we can see that its rarity is due to the fact that they were translations to Spanish or the first editions or the first translations to Latin prepared by Lorenzo Valla that, interestingly, were initially printed only in workshops located in Spain.
After closely analyzing the descriptions of these editions of Latin classics printed in Spain in search of those features common to them that could explain what made them attractive to readers outside of Spain, it is of note that they are all translations to Spanish or Catalan with the exception of the Salamanca edition of Pomponius Mela.

These publications, initially produced to respond to the demand of a certain local audience whose language was Old Spanish, probably attracted the attention of an erudite audience interested in the editions of classic texts prepared by prominent figures like Alfonso de Cartagena. Precisely those editions with more copies outside of Spain are those that best represent Spanish Renaissance humanism. The editions of texts in Latin printed in Spain, on the other hand, depended directly on models printed in Italy, as recent studies have shown.

They might have also appealed to bibliophiles and collectors because of their rarity since they were editions that were only printed in Spain or because of the scarcity of the number of copies conserved due to the nature of the edition itself and the use they were meant for at the time of printing.

These opposing views—on the one side an erudite audience for which the book contains a valuable text for study and on the other a bibliophile audience for whom the book in itself is valuable and for that reason must be stored and taken care of—would explain the large amount of copies that have survived beyond Spanish borders. This allows us to identify different profiles of readers over the centuries.

2. **Provenance Mark Analysis and Classification Criteria and Previous Owners of the Copies Conserved Outside of Spain.**

Text annotations and provenance marks in this corpus of copies belong to different periods. Dating them is of the utmost importance, especially when the readers are anonymous. This is in addition to the key historical circumstances in the dissemination of this document heritage. We can pick out three phases by following the criteria of the chronology of the provenance marks and the main historical circumstances.

These provenance marks have allowed us to identify different owner profiles. The types of recognizable readers are

1. academics and the erudite,
2. members of religious orders,
3) nobles,
4) collectors and
5) booksellers.

- From the time of printing to the 17th century

Text annotations and provenance marks that date from this period show that the books printed in Spain during the incunable period were intended for a local reader. It is hard to identify their owners since frequently they did not write down their names. Sometimes they would leave a record of the place where they acquired the book, the date, or the price they paid. In the copy of the edition of Los Cinco libros de Séneca held in the Czartoryski Library (Kraków, Polska)\(^4\), the following text annotation is on the cover (a'1r): "Este libro compre en Montoro por cinco reales a onze de mayo de 1563 annos. S[t]anto T[omo del castillo]."

Sometimes owners did sign their copies. These include Johann Albrecht Widmanstetter (1506-1557) who put his name on the copy of Cancionero by Juan del Encina which contains the Spanish translation of Virgil's Bucolica and is currently conserved in Munich\(^5\). Jacques Auguste de Thou (1553-1617) stamped his shield on the binding of La hystoria de Alexandre by Quintus Curtius\(^6\).

In terms of the profiles of owners we identified in this period, they are mainly academics, the erudite, and scholars. This kind of reader often left their trace on the copies in the form of text annotation in the margins or between the lines referring to the classic text and their study of it. Some of these readers are anonymous: They did not leave their signature or their name making them unidentifiable.

Another kind of provenance marks brings us to religious institutions like the Society of Jesus schools’ libraries, since these books were indispensable for teaching, and the convents and monasteries where they were necessary for education and the use of the congregations. They have generally been conserved in cities where the institution had a presence. Some examples include the Jesuit School in Salamanca whose

\(^4\) Seneca, Los Cinco Libros de Seneca, (transl. by Alfonso de Cartagena), Sevilla, 1491, Meinhard Ungut and Stanislaus Polonus (ISTC is00374000; GW M41253; CICLE0093). Copy: Biblioteca Czartoryski (Kraków, Polska), shelfmark: 146 III Inc. (CICLE0093-133a).
\(^5\) Vergilius, Bucolica (transl. by Juan del Encina), ff. 31-48, Cancionero by Juan del Encina; Salamanca, 1496, [Juan de Porras] (ISTC ie00039600; GW 9301; CICLE0099). Copy: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, shelfmark: 2 Inc.c.a.3323 (CICLE0099-040a).
\(^6\) Quintus Curtius, Historiae Alexandri Magni (Spanish transl.), Sevilla, 1496, Meinhard Ungut and Stanislaus Polonus (ISTC ic01007000; GW 7879; CICLE0065). Copy: Hispanic Society of America, shelfmark: INC 86a, reg. 18807 (CICLE0065-082a).
collections were incorporated into the University of Salamanca’s library (*Facta et dicta memorabilia* by Valerius Maximus\(^7\) or *Chorographia* by Pomponius Mela printed in Salamanca in 1498\(^8\)) and in Portugal the collections of the *São João Evangelista de Xabregas Convent* in Lisbon which were moved to the National Library of Portugal (two copies of the edition *Los cinco libros de Séneca*\(^9\) and one of *Bucolica* and *Georgica*\(^10\)). The marks on these copies were placed by members of a group and are usually anonymous.

A third group is made up of the nobles, heirs to a tradition they demonstrate through their collections of books and family libraries like, for example, the *Barberinis*. The following copies are currently held in the Vatican Library: a copy of Sallust in Latin printed in Valencia in 1475\(^11\) and another copy of the *Proverbios de Seneca* printed in Seville in 1495\(^12\).

- **18th century and first half of the 19th century**

  During the second half of the 18th century and the first half of the 19th different events in Spain had a major impact on the history of this heritage.

  Until the 18th century, the public had no access to private libraries or collections. The Royal Library (Biblioteca Real), founded in 1711 by King Philip V, only allowed a small group of intellectuals to enter. In 1767, a decree expelled the Jesuits, scattering the collections held by the Society of Jesus’s schools. The same occurred with the state church confiscations in Spain in the 19th century. At the same time, books were starting to be seen as part of the national heritage and moves were made to favour the people's access to them. The proclamation of the Charles III’s Royal

\(^7\) Valerius Maximus, *Facta et dicta memorabilia*, (transl. by Hugo de Urríes), Zaragoza, 1495, Paul Hurus (ISTC iv00046000; GW M49217; CICLE0104). Copy: Universidad de Salamanca, Biblioteca General, shelfmark: BG/I.241 (CICLE0104-030a).


\(^9\) Seneca, *Los Cinco Libros de Seneca*, (transl. by Alfonso de Cartagena), Sevilla, 1491, Meinhard Ungut and Stanislaus Polonus (ISTC is00374000; GW M41253; CICLE0093). Copies: Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (Lisboa), shelfmarks: INC. 171 (CICLE0093-061a) e INC. 172 (CICLE0093-061b).


\(^12\) Pseudo Seneca, *Proverbios de Seneca*, (transl. by Pedro Diaz de Toledo), Sevilla, 1495, Meinhard Ungut and Stanislaus Polonus (ISTC is00407000; GW M41384; CICLE0088). Copy: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, shelfmark: Stamp. Barb. BBB. III. 33 (CICLE0088-060a).
Charter of February 17, 1771 forced public libraries to be opened in archbishop and episcopal palaces but also, after the Cádiz Cortes in 1810, a Libraries Commission was created to save the collections of libraries dismantled during the Spanish War of Independence. King Ferdinand VII, however, put an end to these initiatives and it would not be until 1835 during the reign of María Christina when the first Public Provincial Libraries were opened to conserve collections from the religious confiscations. The limited economic funding for these new libraries, however, relegated them to being mere warehouses of books. The absence of records contributed to the fact that during these processes some copies never reached the new libraries and ended up in private hands.

In terms of the owners’ profiles, in this period we already find affluent bibliophile collectors who are interested in copies of Spanish incunabula probably because of their “rarity” which makes them more valuable as collectors items. In this group we might mention Thomas Crofts (1722-1781), Anglican priest, bibliophile and member of the Royal Society who during his time abroad collected rare books, coins, and antiques. In his collection there was a copy of the edition of the Latin translation of the *Fabulae* by Lorenzo Valla (Valencia, ca. 1473)\(^\text{13}\).

Charles de Baschi, Marquis d’Aubais (1686-1777), historian, bibliophile and collector of manuscripts built up a very well-stocked library in Aubais, France, opening its doors to scholars of his time. A copy of the edition of *Las epístolas de Séneca* (Zaragoza, 1496)\(^\text{14}\) was part of his collection. Giovanni Francesco de Rossi (1796-1854) and his wife María Luisa Carlota de Borbón Parma gathered an impressive library which included a copy of the edition of *Proverbia Senecae* (ca. 1496)\(^\text{15}\).

We can also find professors like George Ticknor (1791-1871), Spanish and French language professor at Harvard, who actively participated in creating the Boston Public Library and had a copy of the edition of *Proverbios de Seneca* (Sevilla, 1500)\(^\text{16}\), and enlightened men like Manuel do Cenáculo (1724-1814), bishop of Beja and later

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\(^\text{16}\) Pseudo Seneca, *Proverbios de Seneca*, (transl. by Pedro Díaz de Toledo), Sevilla, 1500, Magnus Herbst and Johann Peginitzer (ISTC is00408000; GW M41378; CICLE0090). Copy: Boston Public Library, shelfmark: Q.404.4 (CICLE0090-107a).
archbishop of Evora, who founded several libraries in Portugal and owned a copy of the translation to Spanish of Virgil’s *Bucolica* included in Juan del Encina’s *Cancionero* (today in Evora’s public library)\(^\text{17}\).

- **Second half of the 19th century and 20th century**

  The culmination of the Industrial Revolution which had begun the century before and the economic transformations it triggered enriched a social class of businessmen and bankers but also lawyers and engineers from the wealthiest countries like the United Kingdom and France although especially the United States. These men of great wealth were also collectors and were in contact with specialized booksellers that gave them special and rare copies in particular. They also acquired them at auction or on the many trips they took around the world and would sometimes buy up entire personal libraries. We could mention the lawyer **Samuel Latham Mitchell Barlow** (1826-1889) who owned a copy of the edition of Mela’s *Cosmographia* (Salamanca, 1498)\(^\text{18}\) and the banker **Henry Huth** (1815-1878) who had in his library a copy of the same edition of Mela’s work\(^\text{19}\). Another banker, **François-Florentin-Achille, Baron de Seillière**, (1813-1873), owned a copy of the edition in Catalan *Los quinze llibres de transformacions* (Barcelona, 1494)\(^\text{20}\). **Miles Christopher Horton, Jr.** (1916-2001) and **Enriqueta Agustina Rylands** (1843-1908), the third wife of merchant John Rylands, owned both copies of the edition of *El Salustio Cathilinario y Jugurtha en Romançè* (Zaragoza, 1493). Today Horton's copy is in the Chapel Hill Library and Rylands’ in the John Rylands Library\(^\text{21}\).

  In other cases, the provenance marks belong to well-known scholars, philologists, or Hispanists. **Alfred Morel-Fatio** (1850-1924), librarian, Hispanist, and language and literature professor, falls in this group. He also had a copy of the edition

\(^{17}\) Vergilius, *Bucolica* (transl. by Juan del Encina), ff. 31-48, *Cancionero* by Juan del Encina; Salamanca, 1496, [Juan de Porras] (ISTC ie00039600; GW 9301; CICLE0099). Copy: Biblioteca Pública de Evora, shelfmark: INC-221 (CICLE0099-022a).


\(^{19}\) Pomponius Mela, *De chorographia*, Salamanca, 1498, [Juan de Porras] (ISTC im00455000; GW M34862; CICLE0059). Copy: The Chapin Library at Williams College (Williamstown, EEUU), shelfmark: Am1498.M4 vault (CICLE0059-047a).


\(^{21}\) Sallustius, *El Salustio Cathilinario y Jugurtha en Romançè*, (transl. by Francisco Vidal de Noya), Zaragoza, 1493, Paul Hurus (ISTC is00086000; GW M39628; CICLE0096). Copies: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library, shelfmark: Incunabula 531.1 (CICLE0096-064a) and Manchester University John Rylands Library, shelfmark: 19686 (CICLE0096-054a).
of *Los quinze llibres de transformacions* (Barcelona, 1494)\(^22\). Robert Samuel Turner (1818-1887), linguist and member of the London Philobiblon Society owned the same book Thomas Crofts (1722-1781) had earlier, a copy of the edition of the Latin translation of the *Fabulae* by Lorenzo Valla (Valencia, ca. 1473)\(^23\). Professor John Davis Batchelder (1872-1958)\(^24\) held in his library a copy of the edition of *Los comentarios de Gayo Julio Cesar* (Toledo, 1498) translated by Diego López de Toledo\(^24\). John Stainer (1840-1901), professor, organ player, and composer, owned a copy of the edition of *Metamorphoseon* (Salamanca, ca.1488)\(^25\). George Dunn (1865-1912), bibliophile, paleographer, and specialist in incunabula, had in his possession a copy of Sallust’s work in Latin (Barcelona, 1475)\(^26\).

Lastly, the booksellers, whose relationship with the books was one of work and business not leisure. Their intervention in a copy is minimal so even though they are a mode of transmission of this document heritage they are not owners *per se* since the book is not in their private library. However, as a “link” and for the clues that librarians’ catalogues provide, the informational value of this group is essential in more recent stages. We could mention the American Lathrop C. Harper (1867-1950)\(^27\), the German who lived in London Bernard Quaritch (1819-1899)\(^28\), or William S. Salloch (1906-1990)\(^29\) and Hans Peter Kraus (1907-1988)\(^30\) who immigrated to the United States from East Prussia (what today is Poland) and Austria respectively.

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\(^{27}\) Caesar, *Los comentarios de Gayo Julio Cesar* (transl. by Diego López de Toledo), Toledo, 1498, Peter Hagembach (ISTC ic00026000; GW 5873; CICLE0098). Copy: Lilly Library, Indiana University (EEUU), shelfmark: PA6242.S8 1498 (CICLE0098-042a).


\(^{29}\) Seneca, *Las epístolas de Seneca* (transl. by Pedro Diaz de Toledo), Zaragoza, 1496, Paul Hurus (ISTC is00383000; GW M41298; CICLE0100). Copy: Pierpont Morgan Library, shelfmark: ChL1731K (CICLE0100-099a).
3) How They Have Arrived at Their Current Locations

The journey of Spanish incunabula across our borders can be traced through the private libraries of which they were part. Their owners, especially in the 19th and 20th centuries, were extremely wealthy individuals, mainly aristocrats and European and North American businessmen but also professors and bibliophiles, who looked for and procured copies that they were interested in by attending auctions and frequenting specialized booksellers. These libraries, over time, changed hands once more.

The main desire of these collectors was that their private libraries stay together and these beloved copies not be dispersed. In some cases, these collectors or their family after their death donated their collections to libraries or universities like John Davis Batchelder (1872-1958) and John Boyd Tacher (1847-1909) to the Library of Congress, Alfred Morel-Fatio (1850-1924) to the municipal library of Versailles, Charles de Vallat (1816-1884) to the municipal libraries of Montpellier, George Ticknor (1791-1887) to the Boston Public Library, and Ignacy Bernstein (1836-1909) to Krakaw’s Akademia Umiejetnosci.

Others sold their libraries to prestigious institutions like Otto Heinrich Friederich Vollbehr (1869/72-1945/46) to the Library of Congress, Fernando Palha Osório Cabral (1850-1897) to Harvard University, and Bernardo Mendel (1895-1967) to the Lilly Library.

Others founded institutions to house their collections like Archer Milton Huntington (1880-1955) who founded the Hispanic Society of America or Enriqueta Rylands (1843-1908) who created the John Rylands Library in honor of her husband.

They also sold them to other collectors like the successors of Jacques-Auguste de Thou (1553-1617), George John Spencer (1758-1834), and John Stainer (1840-1901). The library of the humanist Johann Albrecht Widmannstetter (1506-1557) was purchased after his death by Albert V of Wittelsbach, Duke of Baviera, to add to the court’s library, which later became the Bavarian State Library, the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.

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30 Ovidius, *Los quinze llibres de transformacions*, (transl. by Francesc Alegre), Barcelona, 1494, Pere Miquel (ISTC io00186000; GW M28932; CICLE00070). Copy: Cambridge University Library (UK), shelfmark: Inc.3.H.5.3[4440] (CICLE00070-085a)

In most cases, these private libraries were sold at auction in London or Paris and divided into lots which ended up in the hands of booksellers or other collectors or in institutions (national libraries, university libraries, etc.). In this way, the collections scattered. The libraries of Samuel Latham Mitchell Barlow (1826-1889), Thomas Crofts (1722-1781), George Dunn (1865-1922), Augustus Frederick (1773-1843), François-Florentin-Achille, Baron de Seillière, (1813-1873) and Robert Samuel Turner (1818-1887) were broken up that way.

The separation of these copies, spoken to by their current homes, gives us a clear idea of what borders they have crossed over the centuries. A first major block of copies of editions of Latin classics printed in Spain is currently held in Europe (29 libraries; 80 copies), primarily in Italy, France, Portugal, and the United Kingdom although there are a few in Poland, Germany, and Austria. The Bibliothèque Nationale de France and the British Library hold the most copies. The movement of these copies through Europe began quite early but the copies only began arriving in America recently (19th and 20th centuries) chiefly through collectors with huge fortunes and booksellers. A total of 55 copies in 21 libraries are held outside of Europe. Most of them (52) are in the United States, notably in New York in the Hispanic Society and in San Marino, in the Huntington Library. There are only three copies in Latin America in the National Library of Brazil.

4) CONCLUSIONS

A detailed study of the provenance marks of the corpus of copies of incunabula of Latin classes held outside of Spain leads us to conclude that this document heritage was attractive for readers outside of Spain mainly because of its rarity. This special character is due to the text that the edition conveys, to its value as a testimony to the Spanish Renaissance, and to the fact that these are editions printed on a very limited number of occasions and often only in Spain.

We have also been able to identify different kinds of readers related largely to chronological periods and geographic areas through which these copies were scattered. From the very first, the editions printed in Spain were for to local readers, scholars, and students. Over time, new types of owners emerged like nobles, bibliophiles, and collectors. They helped move the copies, crossing first Spanish and then later European borders. Since the 19th century, copies of Spanish incunabula of Latin classics have
been highly valued by affluent collectors. European booksellers who moved to the United States brought with them many of the copies that they then sold to individuals.

These collections have arrived at their current locations through auctions or donations to public institutions’ libraries often in lots so that the collections would stay together. In other cases, also prompted by the desire to keep the collections together, their old owners created institutions to house them.

This corpus of copies allows us to identify and analyze different relevant levels in the history of the transmission and reception of the document heritage forged in the Spanish Renaissance.